



# State of Connecticut

## SENATE

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Planning and Development Committee  
March 7, 2014

In Support of:

H.B. No. 5368 An Act Establishing the Point Stratford Infrastructure Improvement District within the  
Town of Stratford

and

S.B. No. 266 An Act Concerning Property Tax Relief for Members of the Armed Forces on Active Duty  
Outside of the United States

Senator Osten, Representative Rojas, Senator Fasano, Representative Aman and members of the Planning and Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of both H.B. No. 5368 An Act Establishing the Point Stratford Infrastructure Improvement District within the Town of Stratford and S.B. No. 266 An Act Concerning Property Tax Relief for Members of the Armed Forces on Active Duty Outside of the United States.

**H.B. No. 5368**

First, I would like to address the importance of H.B. No. 5368 to the growth and development of Stratford and surrounding communities. This legislation will establish a special tax district across 78.32 total acres in southern Stratford, inclusive of the dormant Stratford Army Engine Plant. This is the first step in launching an expansive project to breathe life into the community, create new jobs and provide much needed tax revenue for the people of Stratford.

Currently, the Army Engine Plant is a contaminated, inoperative brownfield. The area surrounding the plant has been vacant and unused for far too long. This project will enable us to transform the space into a place of action and growth. Many have advocated for this redevelopment for decades, and it is finally time to move forward.

The Stratford Delegation is united in our support of this venture. We envision an entirely new mixed use revitalization project, including space for both commercial and residential development. Restaurants, shops,

offices and new homes will rejuvenate a transformed waterfront. The mixed use space will allow for a variety of business opportunities, maximizing the potential impact on the local economy. We will establish a new community that will bring opportunities to countless families and spark job growth for years to come.

Unemployment in Connecticut is a serious problem that impacts thousands of families. According to data from the Department of Labor, Connecticut has had negative job growth over the past 25 years and 23,500 fewer residents employed today than there were in January 2011. In addition to the statewide job problem, Sikorsky recently announced a layoff of over 600 workers, with a majority of those individuals being employees in Connecticut.

These numbers are daunting, especially for the people of Stratford, but solutions are in sight. The Point Stratford redevelopment project is crucial to rejuvenating the community and paving a road towards job relief for our local families.

Legislation to create the Point Stratford tax district will give Stratford the tools we need to seek appropriate financing for significant infrastructure development. It is the first and most critical step in bringing our visions to fruition.

Once we address this first hurdle, I look forward to a comprehensive planning and vetting process during which experts in all fields will be encouraged to share their input and help guide us in respectful and smart redevelopment. The people of Stratford have waited a very long time to move forward with this plan, and we are all dedicated to making sure the project is done right.

The plans are based on previous special acts which authorized the creation of improvement districts in Stamford, Bridgeport, Windsor, Southington and East Hartford, leading to significant community transformations. Similar to these projects, Point Stratford redevelopment will create exciting opportunities for not only our local community, but also our region and state as a whole.

It is imperative that the state support this crucial first step for Stratford.

#### S.B. No. 266

Today, I also would like to share my support for S.B. No. 266, concerning tax relief for members of the armed forces on active duty outside the United States. Currently, Connecticut residents on active duty in Iraq or Afghanistan are not charged interest on delinquent property taxes during their time abroad for a period of one year. I support expanding this law to all service men and women on active duty and stationed overseas - anywhere in the world. If an individual is serving our country on active duty outside of the United States, it should not matter in what country he or she is serving. Rather, everyone serving overseas on active duty, anywhere in the world outside of the U.S., should be treated equally.

We also need to extend legislation to cover the full time individuals are deployed overseas. This bill removes the current one year period during which municipalities cannot charge or collect interest, therefore assisting our active duty residents who are deployed for longer than one year. Since deployments can extend many years, we need to make this change to respect the entire length of deployment.

This bill makes two needed changes to our current legislation to ensure that municipalities better assist the men and women who risk their lives for our nation every day.

Thank you for raising these bills and for the opportunity to testify today.